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ABSTRACT

This guide presents tools for persuading parents to advocate for increased compensation for their child's care teacher/provider in order to break the link between what parents pay for child care and what providers earn, to advocate for a greater public investment in child care, and to improve the work environment for child care providers. The guide maintains that by working together, providers and parents can create better quality child care and better jobs for child care teachers and providers. Included in this guide is a checklist of actions parents can take in general and in connection with the Worthy Wage Campaign. The guide delineates ways to respond to children's concerns when their care provider leaves. Successful fund raising strategies are then described, including creating an "ad book," holding raffles, conducting a bowl-a-thon, and organizing a direct donor campaign. Suggestions are offered for building coalitions within the community to advocate for child care teachers/providers. The guide incorporates ways to engage the creative spirit to build momentum for the worthy wage movement, including examples of stories and songs and a job shadowing activity to demonstrate the work environment in child care to community leaders. Talking points of policy advocates are also presented. The guide concludes with a "to do" list for parents to make a commitment to the Worthy Wage Campaign and increase their own professionalism, advocacy, and leadership skills. (KB)

WORKING TOGETHER FOR KIDS: Parent Action Guide Center for the Child Care Workforce

*Teachers and providers can't afford to stay.
Parents can't afford to pay.
Take action for a better way!*

The Problem.

Have you or someone you know had trouble finding good child care? Has your child care fallen through and caused you to miss work? Do you or your child worry about who your caregiver will be? Do you ever wonder if your child care as good as your child deserves? If your answer to any of these questions is YES, you are in the company of many working parents.

If you are like most parents working outside the home, child care is the fourth largest expense in your family's budget after food, housing and taxes. It is easy to assume that child care work is well paid because child care is expensive for you, but consider these facts about your child care dollar:

- **While most of your child care dollar is used to pay personnel costs, teachers and providers are not earning a self-sufficiency wage.** Personnel costs range from 50 to 80% of a child care center's budget. Other budget categories include the costs for space, insurance, licensing fees, teaching supplies, food, and utilities. Whether your child care arrangement is a center-based program or a family child care home, these other costs are largely fixed and have probably risen, sometimes dramatically, in recent years. When fixed costs go up, it means an increase in your fees or a loss of wages to child care staff. In real dollars, most child care teachers have made no gains in salary over the past ten years.
- **Low wages leads to high turnover.** Roughly one-third of teachers and providers will leave their jobs this year, most often to earn a better living elsewhere. As a result of this high turnover in the field, the quality of care that children receive suffers tremendously.
- **Good child care is more expensive than most parents can afford!** It is expensive because young children need close adult attention and supervision in order to thrive and grow when they are away from you. This means a small number of children for each adult caregiver, and caregivers well-educated in the skills and responsibilities of providing good care. Many working families spend as much as one-quarter of their income on child care, yet if child care teachers were justly compensated, the cost would nearly double.

Good Child Care Jobs = Good Care for Children. Being an ADVOCATE for your child's teacher or provider is a way of also being an advocate for your child. Working together we can create better child care for your child and better jobs for child care teachers and family child care providers. Working together, we must:

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Marci Young

- Break the link between what parents pay for child care – often too much – and what child care teachers and family child care providers earn – almost always too little. Every child deserves the best!
- Advocate for a greater public investment in child care. Recent research on early brain development has shown that learning does not begin with kindergarten, but at birth. But currently, our nation's public investment in education is the lowest during the time when the brain is developing most rapidly – the first five years of life.
- Improve the work environment of child care teachers and family child care providers using the "Model Work Standards," recently developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, to help programs plan for change and engage the community in the process.

Be a PARENT ADVOCATE!

"Advocacy" is speaking out on behalf of another. Because children don't vote or contribute to political action campaigns, they must count on their parents and teachers to be their political voice. Because child care teachers and providers are the key to *high-quality* child care, they need parent support in their call for better wages, health care, accessible and affordable training, and a work environment that encourages them to stay in the field. Because many parents cannot afford the full cost of quality child care, they must be prepared to tell elected officials and policy makers about the importance of the first years of life in determining the kind of future citizen a child will be. *Everyone* benefits from high-quality child care, and better public funding of our child care system is essential!

Whenever you have the opportunity:

- Be an informed voter and VOTE!
- Respond to requests from your child care program to write letters, make a phone call, or speak out about state and local efforts to support the child care workforce. Your calls and letters can make the difference between a bill passing or failing.
- Take time to tell your elected officials about how child care affects your ability to work. Share your personal experience of the challenges of finding good child care and the impact of teacher turnover on you and your family.

A Checklist: What Parents Can Do...

Between now and May 1, Worthy Wage Day, you can:

- ✓ Find out whether there is a Worthy Wage Day activity in your community, plan to attend, and invite other parents to join you.
- ✓ Join the Worthy Wage Network and add your name to the growing list of people who support a greater public investment in child care targeted specifically at improving child care jobs. To join, visit the Center for the Child Care Workforce website www.ccw.org or call us for information. Encourage other parents to join, too.
- ✓ Ask whether your child's program is working to create better child care jobs using the new Model Work Standards, or developing an action plan to reduce staff turnover. If so, be prepared to pledge your support. If not, offer to purchase the resource publications to help them get started. The following are available through the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW):

Taking on Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Center Teachers and Directors;

Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Center-Based Teaching Staff; and Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards, and Creating Better School-age Care Jobs: Model Work Standards.

To order, call 800-UR-WORTHY or 202-737-7700.

Today, and every day, you can:

- ✓ Educate yourself and other parents about working conditions in your child's program: What is the salary scale and benefit package for teachers? If you use family child care, is the provider able to earn a decent income after expenses? Do personnel policies or parent contracts exist at the program? Does the program's budget assure ongoing training and educational experiences for the teachers or provider?
- ✓ Let your child's teacher/provider know that you believe in the worthiness of their work: Give sincere thanks for caregivers and the important work they do – not just once in a while, but whenever you count your blessings!
- ✓ Ask your child care teacher/provider what parents can do to support their work... then take suggestions to heart! Maybe it's chipping in to cover some training fees, taking a day off work and caring for someone else's child to allow attendance at a special event, providing an extra hand in the program when you can, contributing materials, volunteering to serve on a committee, etc.
- ✓ Let your employer know that your child care problems are their problems, too. Your child care arrangements affect your ability to give the best to your job. Be ready to offer suggestions about what they can do.
- ✓ Ask your employer or union to sponsor child care programs, or to provide child care as a benefit option.
- ✓ Consider your own job benefits – health coverage, retirement, paid holidays, sick and vacation pay, etc. – and expect no less for your child care provider.
- ✓ If you are part of a church or community organization which cares about children's issues, make quality child care and compensation part of your social action agenda.
- ✓ Support organizing efforts. If your child care teacher organizes for better wages and working conditions, do not view this as an adversarial move, but rather as a method of improving the quality of care your child receives.

My Child's Teacher is leaving...again! What can I do?

Although adults may refer to the departure of a child care teacher or provider as "staff turnover," children experience it as loss. Whenever turnover happens, these suggestions can help you respond to your child's concerns.

- ❖ **Be empathetic.** If your child is verbal, talk to him or her, and draw on your own experiences. "It's very sad when someone you like leaves..." "It might be a little hard or even scary to get to know someone new..." "I remember when..." Be open to a range of emotions, from little or no reaction to anger, anxiety or withdrawal.
- ❖ **Build a sense of security.** Minimize other changes your child may be experiencing at this time (for example, it's not the time to move to that "big girl" bed right now...) Stick closely to your regular routines both at home and in your child care program. Talk about what is the same!
- ❖ **Be positive.** Your welcoming attitude towards a new teacher or a new family child care provider, and your patience while she gets to know you and your child, will influence your child's acceptance.
- ❖ **Look for changes in your child's behavior.** Increased negativity, misbehavior, withdrawal, poor sleeping or eating, harder to comfort... these and more could be part of your child's experience. Find a family member, friend or professional to talk to if you're concerned.
- ❖ **Ask questions.** Why did the teacher leave or the provider stop caring for children? If you are using a child care center, what is the program doing to avoid this problem in the future? How is the transition being handled in the child care program while you are at work?
- ❖ **Be prepared to get involved.** The reasons that most child care teachers and providers leave their work are low wages and inadequate benefits. Together with other parents and the program staff, you can discover ways to improve the work environment for your child's teachers. Take this opportunity to learn about where your child care dollars are spent. Being an advocate for your child's teacher or family child care provider is also a way of being an advocate for your child!

*Center for the Child Care Workforce
733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1037
Washington, DC, 20005-2112
202 737-7700 (tel)
202 737-0370 (fax)
wwage@ccw.org (e-mail)
<http://www.ccw.org>*

Four Successful Fundraising Strategies

1. CREATING AN 'AD BOOK' - One way to raise money from local community businesses to mark an important organizational anniversary and/or promote your campaign's work is through the production of an Ad Book -- a booklet or pamphlet made up primarily of advertisements that you have sold. The Ad Book also contains the printed program for your party or event, so all participants receive one. This way prospective advertisers will know who will see their ads. The goal is to raise more money through ad sales than it costs to produce, print and distribute the Ad Book.

Why an Ad Book? They do not need to cost a lot to produce; a page of ads is typically sold at a rate that is five to ten times more than the cost to produce it. They can generate support from individuals and businesses that might not be as likely to respond to a request for a direct contribution. People will sometimes spend more money for an ad than they would for a contribution because they see it as promoting their business as well. Finally, it is often easier for members of the group to solicit ads than direct donations.

Steps:

1. Assess your ability to do this project: Do you have volunteers to work on it (soliciting, doing follow-up, and attending to details are all relatively labor-intensive)? Do you have enough time? This first year you might choose to do this on a small scale (10-12 advertisers) and build on it in the future.
2. Plan a budget - Set a fundraising goal, estimate expenses and project income. Expenses will include: design and layout, typesetting or desktop publishing, printing (easily 60-70% of the entire cost), postage to send the journal out to advertisers and to send solicitation letters, phone expenses for follow-up calls, and any staff time. Set prices for ads (you may want to check prices on what other organizations charge), but a starting place is \$25 for a one-line greeting, \$50 for a business card size ad, going up to as high as \$500 for a full page.
3. Develop a List of Potential Advertisers. Start first by considering people who are likely to say yes; vendors that child care programs do business with or have relationships with; businesses that parents in your programs own, operate, or are employed at; and businesses that advertise with organizations that support social and economic justice causes.
4. Develop a packet and sent to prospects. Packets should include a solicitation letter, Ad-Rate Sheet that explains various prices, deadlines for submitting ad copy, and a tear-off to send back an agreement to place an ad.
5. Follow-up calls.
6. Production of the ad book.

2. RAFFLES - Instead of give-aways and door prizes at events, try a raffle! Like ad books, the goal must be to earn more at the raffle than you spend putting it together (donated prizes are the key to success).

Why a raffle? It's FUN! People like a chance to win! Like ad books, raffles don't have to cost your campaign a lot to do. It is often easier for members of a group to sell raffle tickets for a small amount of money than it is to ask for large sums; most anyone can buy a raffle ticket. We have in our workplaces both sellers and buyers; this is a perfect project to engage parents in!

Steps:

1. Assess your ability to do this project: Do you have potential sources for prizes (2 or 3 good ones is all you really need)? Can you design and produce raffle tickets? Do you have volunteers to do the legwork of getting the raffle tickets to child care programs and picking up sold tickets?
2. Develop a plan: who will do what and when... Begin with soliciting donations for prizes. Remember the prize has to be worth it! Be creative in your thinking about what ticket-buyers may find valuable (2 examples follow). Determine where and when the drawing will be -- a Worthy Wage Day event is perfect!
3. Find out from other raffles, what if any restrictions there are in your state. For example, in some places it is illegal to set a price for tickets, but you can sell them for "a suggested donation of ____". Design and produce tickets.
4. Sell tickets!! Get everyone you know to help you sell tickets!

Two nonprofit agencies in North Carolina have come up with a profitable way to hold a raffle. You may want to try or adapt one of these ideas as a fundraiser for your campaign:

Day Care Services Association in Chapel Hill, NC has a raffle called "Don't Cook for a Month." They ask thirty local restaurants to donate dinner for two. Tickets are \$2.00 each. DCSA asks local child care centers to help sell the tickets, and the centers receive \$1.00 per ticket sold. They create a flyer which advertises the thirty restaurants who have donated. They print the tickets in-house and advertise in the local paper. A ticket is even placed in the local paper with information on how to buy it. They have made as much as \$5,000.

The Family Support Network in Greater Greensboro, NC holds an annual raffle. They get local businesses to donate prizes and then they group the prizes together into different packages. For instance this year one of the prizes included a "Children's Package" which had a video, stuffed animal, beanie baby, pizza certificate, and gift certificate to a children's store. In all they had 20 prize packages. They then have tickets printed and sell the tickets for \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. They have their board members and friends of the agency sell tickets. The winning tickets are drawn on Valentine's Day every year. This year they made almost \$4,000.

3. A BOWL-A-THON! Various 'a-thons' have become standard fundraisers, but this one has some particular advantages. Here's how it works: Before the scheduled day of bowling, people solicit contributions, either on a "per-pin" basis or as a lump sum. Lump

sums can be collected before or after bowling. A per-pin pledge is collected after bowling, when the pledge is multiplied by the bowler's score. For example, a 10-cent-per-pin pledge multiplied by a score of 95 figures out to a contribution of \$9.50.

Why a bowl-a-thon? This event can cost almost nothing to put on! Unlike walk-a-thons or runs, there are no routes to plan, no permits to secure, no T-shirts to purchase... The idea may be novel enough that seeking contributions might actually be fun; and because the contributions will likely be small, it's practice for pitching for larger amounts down the line. In addition to raising money for your campaign, it may also serve the purpose of strengthening personal relationships among campaign members -- an evening out together where child care is not the topic of conversation!

Steps:

1. Secure a bowling alley and make reservations in advance (you may even get a bowling alley to donate the cost of games). You'll have to estimate number of bowlers so you have no more than 4-5 per lane.
2. Circulate pledge sheets and 'how to' instructions. (Give at least 4-6 weeks to collect pledges).
3. Inspire members to collect pledges -- the key to a successful event. Again use your parents and their connections as possible contributors.
4. On the day of the event, be organized when you get to the alley in terms of assigning people lanes, collecting fees if necessary, etc. You might want to add to the experience with funny prizes: most enthusiastic bowler, most original form...
5. After the bowling day, make sure bowlers go back to their sponsors and collect the money; a closing date for collection is recommended.
6. After pledges have been collected, ask bowlers to turn in their pledge sheets so that contributors can receive a thank-you note, and so their names can be added to your mailing list for future donor solicitations. You may also want to arrange way to thank the bowlers and perhaps award a grand prize to the top pledge-getter.

4. DIRECT DONOR CAMPAIGN. We would be amiss if we did not include with these ideas, the single most effective way of raising money: asking for it! All you need is a letter with a carefully crafted message, and a follow-up plan. In addition, you can begin a major donor campaign by identifying 10-20 people who might give \$100 or more and engage them in face-to-face solicitations.

Please send in your experiences with successful fundraisers and we'll share them with others as this resource is updated annually. Our thanks to Stephanie Roth of Chardon Press, Berkley, CA; Day Care Services Association in Chapel Hill, NC; and the Family Support Network in Greater Greensboro, NC for contributing these ideas.

BUILDING COALITIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

While most child care remains the financial responsibility of parents, high quality services are just as important to the entire community. Without access to high quality child care everyone suffers -- businesses and government as well as parents and children. Therefore, as many people as possible should be involved in generating the political will to solve the problem of low wages and high turnover. Inviting members of the community to become involved in your cause is called coalition building. Its purpose is to secure majority support for the issue, in order to generate initiatives aimed at addressing the problem.

Just as building a house needs a foundation to support itself, coalition building requires constructing a strong foundation of support within the child care community in order to spread out to other groups. The level and range of support that exists among people who are connected to the profession is critical to building a strong campaign. Educating the profession should be part of your campaign plan. This is called internal coalition building and includes parents, family child care providers, center-based child care staff, administrators, infant caregivers, school age care providers, resource and referral agencies, adult educators in child development, students, in short, everyone connected to the field.

It is also important to call on groups or individuals who are outside the profession but may have some interest in the issue. This is called external coalition building. Examples are women's organizations, labor groups, human service agencies, local and state governments, chambers of commerce, community development agencies, businesses, churches, religious groups, foundations, and service organizations like Kiwanis.

Because the degree to which different groups must feel ownership over the child care compensation issue varies, how you do outreach must vary as well. For those within the profession, for example, you can use your early childhood language and you can draw upon your daily experiences to articulate and even demonstrate the need for active involvement among professionals in the field. By identifying a core of committed people, you may be most effective by building slowly through personal contacts -- provider to provider, teacher to teacher, parent to parent, director to director. Concrete activities that initially bring people together -- a recognition day, parade, or identifying an issue that people can rally around at a planned event -- are opportunities to be seized in the building of a coalition.

Outreach to those outside of the profession, however, may require that we define our common areas of interest and speak clearly in language that is commonly understood and/or geared to the particular outreach group. Keep in mind that the urgency you feel about improving compensation is not yet universally shared. People may need to build their understanding of why it matters.

While it is important to strengthen both internal and external ties to the community, remember to start small. Coalition building is a developmental process and building

healthy relationships takes time and patience. It is better to form two or three strong relationships over time, than to try to cultivate too many relationships and not be able to maintain them all. Given the barriers of time, energy, and people power, an appropriate place to focus is on existing coalitions who have included child care in their agendas.

If you are wondering where to begin...

- Assess the current status of the compensation movement in your community -- who is doing what, where, and how to improve the quality of child care.
- Contact the Center for the Child Care Workforce or visit our website (www.ccw.org) to find others from whom you can learn.
- Identify the groups or individuals in your community who have an interest in the quality of child care.
- Develop a mailing list of child care centers, family child care homes, AEYC members, women's organizations, labor groups, etc., and send a letter asking for their support with a membership form or an invitation to a roundtable gathering on the compensation issue or a fundraiser.
- Plan activities that respond to your local agenda and that reflect the strengths of your resources.
- Try to find a clear and simple way for groups to support you. If they feel needed, this will build the foundation of support you need. Be prepared to reciprocate by attending their events.
- Ensure that all coalition members have an important role to play in any activity you sponsor or effort you undertake.
- Maintain a written history of your experiences both as a self-reference and to share your experiences with other communities, strengthening our movement nationwide.
- Reflect and celebrate throughout the coalition building process and beyond as you work to sustain your organization. Reflecting on your accomplishments and celebrating them provides energy for each next step.

Creating Stories & Songs: Two Examples. *The Action Packet refers to 'engaging the creative spirit' to build momentum for the worthy wage movement in your community. Following is the text for the newest Worthy Wage Fairy Tale and the lyrics to a song written by CCW staff, entitled 'Turnover, Turnover'. Both of these examples have used existing resources; we just gave them a worthy wage twist. You can create a BIG Book with the story simply by putting the designated text on it's own page and engaging a child care teacher's artistic talents to illustrate it. Please include recognition of the authors in your final product. These are shared with you to inspire other stories and songs. If it does, we'd love to pass them around. Submit your creations to CCW, attention Peggy Haack.*

The Teeny Tiny Teacher Gets a Great Big Raise

A collaboration story from the Worthy Wage Retreat, July 10, 1999
Asheville, North Carolina

Written by:

Lisa Lenyard - Boston, MA
Linda Green - Gainesville, FL
Terri Rosten - Denver, CO
Paula Sherman - New Bedford, MA
Vic McMurray - Madison, WI

Illustrated by: *(you fill in this part)*

**We dedicate this story to all the hard working, dedicated early childhood professionals out there.
May we all get the great, big raise we deserve.**

- p. 1. Once upon a time, there was a teeny tiny teacher who worked in a teeny tiny childcare center. She took care of teeny tiny children, which wasn't a teeny tiny responsibility. But she still received a teeny tiny paycheck.
- p.2. The teeny tiny teacher got a teeny tiny bit mad about her teeny tiny paycheck. She decided to go for a teeny tiny walk to blow off a teeny tiny bit of steam. On her teeny tiny walk, she met a teeny tiny group of women.
- p.3. This teeny tiny group of women were more than a teeny tiny bit mad about their teeny tiny wages. They were in a rage! They didn't think in teeny tiny ways about their work or their wage. They asked the teeny tiny woman if she wanted to join their teeny tiny group to help change their teeny tiny wages.
- p.4. The teeny tiny woman said she had to think about it for a teeny tiny bit. While she was taking a teeny tiny nap, she heard a teeny tiny voice call out **"GIVE ME MY RAISE."**
- p.5. A teeny tiny bit later, the teeny tiny woman heard the voice again, only this time it was a teeny tiny bit louder, **"GIVE ME MY RAISE."**
- p.6. A teeny tiny bit later, the teeny tiny voice called out again, only this it wasn't teeny tiny at all. It said: **"GIVE ME MY RAISE!"** The teeny tiny woman had finally found her rage and she got her worthy wage.

The End.

"Turnover, Turnover"

*Sing to the tune of "Matchmaker, Matchmaker", from Fiddler on the Roof
Words by CCW Staff*

First verse:

Turnover, Turnover
Find me some staff
Send me a sub
Send her real fast.
Turnover, Turnover
Send in your ad
And find me a perfect match.

Please make sure she has training
And even a CDA
Me, well, I wouldn't holler
If she had a practicum and a BA!

Second verse:

Congress, Oh Congress,
Give us some dough
Don't do your usual
And just say 'No'.
Congress, Oh Congress
Please take a stand
And make your investment grand!

Tax credits, they just won't do it.
Career ladders don't deliver the pay.
We need a major investment,

Increased compensation's the only way.

Third verse:

Parents, Oh Parents,
Stand up with us.
Do what you can,
Make a big fuss.
Parents, Oh Parents,
We're in it with you.
Your children will thank you, too.

Remember your children depend on
The quality of care they receive.
But how good can child care be
When every year half the teachers must
leave?

Repeat:

Turnover, Turnover
Find me some staff
Send me a sub,
Send her real fast.
Turnover, Turnover
Send in your ad
And find me a perfect match!

Job Shadows: Dramatic Role-Playing for Adults

Young children engage in dramatic role-playing all the time. Through role-play, they temporarily assume new identities, learning about different roles people play in our society. By experiencing other roles in this immediate way, children incorporate new understandings about the world into their repertoire of social knowledge. Dramatic play is serious business for a child.

Job Shadowing invites respected members of the community to shadow, or work along side, early childhood professionals as they carry out their regular job responsibilities. It demonstrates for visitors the working environment in a child care center or family child care home, allowing them hands-on experience of daily life as it really is. The procedures for **Job Shadowing** are summarized below.

1. Invite Your "Shadow"

Create a list of people you might invite. Consider various community leaders who have an effect of decision-making in your area. Suggestions include elected officials, prominent educators, business leaders, and media personalities. Call and/or send out invitations.

2. Make Advance Preparations

Decide with the guest how long that person will take part in shadowing (at least an hour, but the longer the involvement, the more accurate the impression will be). Brief the shadow on what will be occurring during that time period, and what his or her role will be. Provide information in advance on what quality early education entails, and the role of the educator in promoting development. Prepare a packet to be given to the job shadow that includes information about your center or home, as well as background regarding compensation issues. Finally, if you are willing alert the media to this event. Coordinating publicity efforts with others in your area who are also hosting a job shadow will be more efficient and have a greater impact.

3. The Job Shadow Day

As the responsibilities of the early childhood educator are carried out, explanations are offered to the job shadow about the ways in which children's needs are being met. Encourage the job shadow to participate as fully as possible, particularly in interactions with the children. Take pictures of the job shadow acting in the role of assistant to a teacher or provider. At the end of the work period, present the job shadow with a ceremonial "check" for the amount earned for that length of time. (Great photo opportunity, and a definite high point in past experiences). Follow up with a note of appreciation from you, to which you might add children's thank you's.

What do job shadows learn from assuming a social role, that is outside the realm of their own personal experience? They gain firsthand knowledge of what is involved in carrying out that role in the real world--from meeting children's basic needs to accommodating families. They come to understand how early education nurtures the seeds for lifelong learning and productive citizenship--a far greater mission than merely

"baby-sitting." Perhaps the most dramatic aspect of this dramatic role-play experience is the realization that early childhood professionals are compensated so minimally for the jobs they do in real lives.

For early childhood professionals, caring for children is as serious a business as dramatic play is for children. Wages do not begin to reflect the requirements, responsibilities, and importance of the work that is undertaken on a daily basis. **Job Shadowing** is a powerful way of getting that point across to others. Through your participation, you are able to give insight into the crucial role teachers and providers perform in our society.

(Adapted from an article by Judy Milavetz, QCA Chair, North Dakota AEYC)

Sample Job Shadow Invitation Letter

(Personalize this letter to fit your needs.)

Dear Mayor Robinson,

We represent a group of local citizens who care deeply about the quality of care and education for young children in our city. High quality programs are essential not only to the health of children and families, but also to the prosperity and well-being of the entire community.

Despite the importance of skilled and stable workforce providing for children's healthy development, our child care system is plagued by low wages and chronic turnover of staff. This crisis has given rise to a national movement to raise awareness about the importance of high quality programs and to advocate for a new system that does not ignore the economic needs of teachers and providers.

Therefore, in recognition of the dedication and skill provided daily by the early childhood teachers and caregivers in our city, we are conducting a "Child Care Job Shadow" on May 1st. A job shadow is when local child care businesses open their doors to community members for the purpose of educating them about their work. Spending even a few hours working along side a skilled teacher or caregiver is evidence enough that the demands and responsibilities of working with young children deserve a worthy wage.

We are inviting you to participate by spending some of your time working in a child care center or family child care home on that day. Afterwards, we will invite the local press to attend a ceremony in which you will be presented with a "check" for the amount you would earn as a qualified early childhood teacher or provider in our community.

We hope you will make a commitment to join other local leaders by participating in our "Worthy Wage Job Shadow" on May 1st. We will be calling in one week to schedule your participation. We look forward to talking with you then, and to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

_____ and _____
Co-chairs of the ABZ Worthy Wage Campaign

"TALKING POINTS" FOR POLICY ADVOCATES

The following 'talking points' were designed to help you answer questions that may arise as we work together to build support for public investment in child care targeted to improve child care jobs.

1. **"Why do we need a public investment to improve child care jobs?"** For many families, the cost of child care is a significant burden, with some families paying up to a quarter or a third of their income for child care. But our efforts to keep services relatively affordable have ended up displacing the burden of child care costs onto the child care workforce itself. In effect, low wages and poor benefits subsidize the current child care system. Even when public dollars go directly to families to help pay for child care, reimbursement rates are set at low levels that simply maintain the status quo. The consequence: child care teachers and family child care providers (especially the most skilled and educated) leave the field at an alarming rate, and program quality suffers.
2. **"Haven't we been steadily increasing our public investment in child care?"** While more money than ever has been poured into our child care system in the past decade, very little of it has been directly devoted to improving quality, or to rewarding and retaining teachers and providers. In many ways, the nation has simply made a poorly functioning child care system much larger. As a result, most child care workers are not better off than they were in 1980 or 1990. Money that has been directed to the workforce, has been largely as training programs. These rarely lead to pay raises or offer incentives to stay in the field. As a result -- with turnover rates of 30-40% a year -- we keep training more and more new people, because many of last year's trainees have left child care to make a better living elsewhere. Even during the recent period of record-breaking economic growth, the child care staffing situation did not improve.
3. **"Is there specific legislation I should know about?"** YES. A federal compensation bill, known as the FOCUS Act (Focus on Committed and Underpaid Staff for Children's Sake), has been introduced into both house of the U.S. Congress with bipartisan support (Senate bill S.814 and House bill H.R. 1650). We continue, however, to seek additional legislative sponsors.

In addition, several states are crafting and, in some cases, implementing child care compensation initiatives on the state level. Visit our website www.ccw.org for more information on these initiatives.

Finally, 2002 is the year for re-authorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Advocates are proposing that the level of funding for quality initiatives (including those that impact the compensation and education of the child care workforce) be increased from 4% to 12%.

4. **"Does an increased public investment in child care jobs just mean my taxes go up?"** It is not our intention to place a higher tax burden on the people who can least afford it, or who are already paying high costs for child care. But it is appropriate to look at the social benefits that arise from well-cared for children. Society as a whole benefits from the participation of mothers and fathers in economic, social and political life. Public tax dollars that we already collect can be restructured and spent differently. The millions of dollars that have been invested in our child care system over the past decade can also be used more wisely. Finally, it must be noted that how we spend public dollars is a question of priorities. That doesn't mean there aren't political obstacles, but there are also public surveys to suggest that a growing number of U.S. citizens believe that high quality child care is deserving of a higher priority in the spending of public funds.
5. **"Why now?"** The time is right for a several reasons. First, the problem is urgent: child care job turnover is reaching an all-time high in many communities. It waits to see be seen if the recent down turn in the economy will keep more people on the job, but at what price? Second, we know that improving wages improves stability of the workforce, and subsequently improves program quality. Research in the past decade continues to point to a skillful, stable, well-compensated workforce as a key to quality. Third, we are at a moment in history when our national security has been badly shaken, and budget priorities have dramatically shifted. Out of crisis can arise opportunity -- in this case, the opportunity to place a new national importance on supporting families and regarding children as the foundation for our nation's future, worthy of public investment.

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Make a Commitment Today: A "To Do" List.

What are you willing to do to increase your professionalism, advocacy and leadership skills? Consider the following list and check the items where you are willing to take action. After reviewing the items you've checked, prioritize your list.

I will:

- ☐ Join the Worthy Wage Network – a national advocacy network in support of a public investment to improve child care jobs – and encourage at least two other colleagues to join.
- ☐ Join a professional organization, support group, child care union, and/or a local worthy wage campaign to make my voice for better child care louder.
- ☐ Respond to 'Action Alerts' put out by the Network or my professional affiliations.
- ☐ Speak out to friends, colleagues, family, and others about the link between wages and working conditions and the quality of care that children receive.
- ☐ Object to all references to my work as 'babysitting' or other statements that undervalue my work.
- ☐ Acknowledge my own leadership qualities.
- ☐ Tell my personal story to a policy maker in a letter or through a visit.
- ☐ Write a letter to the editor of my local newspaper in response to a child care story.
- ☐ Be an informed voter, and vote when I have the opportunity.
- ☐ Provide ongoing parent education on the link between quality child care and good child care jobs.
- ☐ Create opportunities for parents to act (for example: to make calls, write letters, or give testimony), and invite them to join the Worthy Wage Network.
- ☐ Continue my own education to build advocacy and leadership skills.
- ☐ Start or maintain a portfolio that reflects my accomplishments and professional growth.
- ☐ Set goals to improve my wages and work environment, using the Model Work Standards as a guide.
- ☐ Mentor or be a 'buddy' to another child care teacher or provider.
- ☐ Be a guest speaker/presenter to a class, community meeting, parent group, or early childhood conference on worthy wages and quality child care.
- ☐ Invite an elected official or community/business leader to visit my program to show child care in action and discuss the challenges I face.
- ☐ Ask, or accept an invitation, to be part of a community advisory or planning group so my voice is 'at the table'.

In concert with others (my co-workers, colleagues, AEYC affiliate, support group, or other professional organizations), I will:

- ☐ Celebrate the accomplishments of our work.
- ☐ Help plan an event that brings child care issues into public focus. For example, I could volunteer for the planning committee, help design flyers, work on mailings, make calls, get donations, work on a media strategy, etc.
- ☐ Engage in building the Worthy Wage Network in my community.
- ☐ Help build a local worthy wage campaign, a teacher support network, or family child care support group which provides a safe place to talk about working conditions, practice advocacy skills, and plan community actions.
- ☐ Include an article or column in my group or my program's newsletter addressing issues of the child care work environment and the child care staffing crisis.
- ☐ Participate in developing an action plan to improve my work environment.
- ☐ Keep a written record of the impact of the child care staffing crisis on our work, document our progress, broadcast 'good news,' and celebrate successes in improving work environments and reducing turnover in my program and in my community.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____